

*Precious Pilgrim,*

*Good day. Daisy, our fourteen-year-old lab who's very sick and I both had a calm, restful sleep. My husband is out of town. On arising, I went into my 6'x4' closet and "sat," yes, that's right, sat for twenty minutes. That's what I try to do each day. It's no big deal for it is a tradition as old as time. Jesus said unto them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile." That's Mark 6:31. It's just trying to be still and to be quiet and to listen. It's usually the noisiest time of the day for me. It's hard to get this noisy mind of mine quiet, but I think that's OK. It's not about my getting it right, but rather, my showing up. I imagine a rambunctious little child skipping or running to her Father's lap. She wants to be there more than any place else and her Daddy knows that, too. She squirms. She fidgets. She jumps down. She jumps up. Her Father God sits there tolerantly smiling, knowing like no other with whom He's dealing, one of His own little lambs. He loves. She loves. He's a lot better at it, for it is His Nature, but she does try and He does smile.*

*The modern day term for this tradition is "centering prayer." There have been many excellent books written on this subject. Authors like Thomas Martin, Basil Pennington, Richard Foster, Thomas Keating come to mind. I remember the first time I read about this contemplative prayer and with great enthusiasm, I thought, "Gosh, I want to be a contemplative. Innocently, ignorantly I went about trying to*

*become one. I bought a stopwatch timer, went into my clothes closet, and sat for five minutes, other days ten minutes, a couple of even fifteen minutes' days. I was bound and determined. Lord, forgive. Silly me. Now I know you can't just make yourself a contemplative on your own. I believe it is a gift from the Lord and, thus far, that gift hasn't been totally given. It's not the most important gift, it's just one for which I yearn. You can make yourself available. "Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." That's where I am now. I just sit and wait. Centering prayer is a discipline of waiting, of anticipating, of drawing near. I love the image in one of the Psalms, which talks of a child resting on his mother's breast. That is where I really want to hang out. Nothing really happens thus far. I think it might have a sandpaper effect on my senses, my perception of the Lord's presence during the day might be a little more alive. Maybe it's like getting a gentle Son tan internally by the Son, the S-o-n. All I know is that I miss it when I don't practice "centering."*

*In this closet in the guesthouse where my husband and I have been living for the last year while our home was being rebuilt after our house fire, it has become a "thin place" for me. I'd never heard that term before, "thin place," until it was used by the bishop of Alabama, the Episcopal bishop, at a conference, Bishop Parsley. I'm not sure who actually coined the phrase and I guess that doesn't matter. I do know the Bishop was talking about the ancient Christian Celts of England,*

*Scotland, and Ireland when he used the term. He refers to places where you can feel the presence of God more strongly. He talked about how the Celts would build their monasteries usually in remote, breathtakingly beautiful spots. He referred to their locations being built on the "edge," meaning somehow in an exquisitely lovely place where we can perceive the nearness of God more strongly.*

*I knew to what he was referring. I wanted to raise my hand and say, "Yes." Yes. It's true there are such places, such hallowed grounds. I've been to such. I've experienced them. Some planned and some just happened upon.*

*I must confess, as you've probably guessed, I am a retreat, convent enthusiast. They are "thin places" for me. I'm a lake lover. It's a "thin place" for me. I'm a baby holder. Each is a "thin place" for me. My list can go on, and hopefully, it will become an endless one. At some point, it would be grand to be able to perceive our Lord's presence so strongly all the time; that all - all becomes a "thin place."*

*Now back to the closet. I guess the reason it's on my mind is that yesterday I spent more than the normal amount of time there. Sadly to say not in a worshipful mode, but rather a wardrobe changing, rearranging one. As I mentioned in your last letter, I spent all day spring-cleaning. Part of that involves moving summer clothes out of the "sitting" closet and putting winter ones in. For a brief time, the closet was empty of hangers with dresses, coats, pants, jackets, skirts, and all that*

*stuff. All that was in there was the little converted camp trunk on the floor. It's altered, altar look could actually be seen. Yes, there was a cross standing on it after all. It was nice to be able to breathe, stand, touch the empty walls. I wished I could have left it like that, but it wasn't practical. There is little storage in this guesthouse. We have really had to use our imaginations and treat this place like a boat, using every conceivable nook and cranny. So, back the clothes went on either side. Back to no light and the only way in to the "sitting" spot is to crawl. I know there's a trunk there and a little cross now and I can feel them.*

*Strangely enough, this too has become a "thin place" and strangely enough, it is even more so in its crowded state than in its short-lived roomy version yesterday. It helps me to remember that although I do love convents and retreat centers, I have been called to live in this world right here on Hull Street. It is a challenge, but isn't life always? It's especially hard to keep the balance of belonging to God and not to the world, even when I am more than one-hundred percent involved in this material swim called wealth. I am to be here, right where the Lord planted me, and He alone can make Hull Street a "thin place." We've had a burnout fire. That's a good start. The new plans in our new home have a little chapel drawn upstairs, without hangers. That will help me, too. It's about surrendering all, all to our Lord.*

*Now I must end. It's time to get ready to go to Headstart kindergarten. Being a volunteer there has become a blessing and it is a "thin place" too.*

*God bless.*

*I am your sister in Christ,*

*Lucy*

*Precious pilgrim, have you also experienced some "thin places" where you perceived your Lord's presence most strongly? He is our all-in-all; the problem is us, not Him. Sometimes we have to draw apart, even if it's crawling into a crowded little closet to be that dependent child whose only desire is to be with his or her Father God.*

*I'd like to end our time today reading Psalms 62:6-9. For God alone my soul in silence waits. Truly my hope is in Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold so that I shall not be shaken. In God my safety and my honor. God is my strong rock and my refuge. Put your trust in Him always, o people. Pour out your hearts before Him for God is our refuge.*

*God bless and have a good day.*